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# Northumberland County Council

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
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**Our ref:** ST/JW  
**Enquiries to:** Cllr Jeff Watson  
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**Date:** 31 January 2019

Dear Secretary of State

**Update from Northumberland County Council's Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the advice accepted by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel regarding proposed changes to Rothbury Community Hospital, (RCH)**

When sharing your view on the decisions made by Northumberland CCG in your letter of 12 November 2018 regarding proposed changes to Rothbury Community Hospital, you requested an update on progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel by the end of January 2019.

A Scrutiny Review Group was established to discuss the recommendations which reported back to the Northumberland Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting of 23 January 2019. A response outlining progress to date, agreed by Members of that Committee and signed by myself a Chairman, accompanies this letter at Appendix 1.

I understand the CCG will be providing their own update to you outlining their proposals, including plans for future public engagement. However, it is acknowledged by all parties that proper evaluation and meaningful engagement will take time. The CCG has stated it would need until summer 2019 to carry out this work with interested parties through Focus Groups and feed back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at that time.

Nevertheless, the Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive updates on progress through our established oversight and assurance processes over that period.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Jeff Watson  
Chair of Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee



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31 January 2019

**Response from Northumberland County Council's Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the advice accepted by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel regarding proposed changes to Rothbury Community Hospital, (RCH).**

This is the response of Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the issues raised by the Independent Reconfiguration Panel. The CCG will provide a separate response.

**Background**

At a meeting on 27 September 2017, held in public at Morpeth Northumberland, Northumberland CCG Joint Locality Executive Board met to consider proposed changes at RCH. The decision making report produced for the meeting included a description of the issues, engagement and consultation processes used, feedback, future services that could be provided at the hospital site and quality, travel and equality impact assessments. Three courses of action were considered:

1. Re-open the inpatient ward;
2. Re-open the inpatient ward and develop a health and wellbeing centre on the hospital site in line with the Save Rothbury Hospital Campaign Group's submission to the consultation; or
3. Permanently close the inpatient ward and shape existing services around a health and wellbeing centre on the hospital site.

The Board unanimously agreed the third option.

On 17 October 2017, Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the CCG's decision to close the inpatient beds permanently. Representatives of the CCG provided a presentation outlining their proposals, and the local member and a representative of the Save Rothbury Hospital Campaign Group also provided presentations to the Committee. The Committee resolved by five votes to two (with one abstention) to refer the matter to the Secretary of State.

Subsequently, on 25 October 2017, Northumberland Overview and Scrutiny Committee referred the decision to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, citing referral grounds as follows:

1. It is not satisfied with the adequacy of content of the consultation with the Committee and the time allowed;
2. It considers that the proposal would not be in the interests of health service provision in the area.

The Secretary of State sought advice from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) and wrote back to the CCGs, JHOSC and other interested stakeholders on 12 November 2018.

This response from the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee summarises the key elements of the letter from the Secretary of State and how these will be addressed. A progress update was requested by the Secretary of State by the end of January 2019, outlining the implementation of the IRP recommendations.

The Secretary of State has accepted the IRP advice that:

1. There were flaws in the engagement and consultation processes that were undertaken by the CCG; and the CCG should therefore work alongside the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HWOSC) to consult properly when developing the future of the hospital.
2. While the IRP recommend that the inpatient ward should not be immediately re-opened, further action locally is required to agree and implement the proposed health and wellbeing centre, potentially including inpatient beds at Rothbury Community Hospital. This further action should include:
  - The CCG and Trust in collaboration with the HWOSC and local community should concentrate their efforts in refining the current 'possible' and 'probable' lists of services into something more tangible;
  - The CCG and The HWOSC should undertake an appropriate assessment to examine the impact of additional travel, costs and inconveniences for families and carers of those affected. Given how long the inpatient ward has been closed, there should be ample evidence now to enable a firm conclusion to be reached;
  - The CCG and HWOSC should focus on the most affected, to consider the impact on families and carers of travelling further afield and to engage fully with the community as the health and wellbeing centre is developed.

There was no instruction in the report to re-run the consultation or to re-open the beds but further action was required locally to agree and implement the Health and Wellbeing Centre. Inpatient beds were to be considered as part of that work and the wider development of services at the hospital and in the local community.

In order to address these recommendations, a Health and Wellbeing OSC (Rothbury Hospital) Review Group was established.

Membership of the Group was sought from the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The cross-party membership comprised five members together with a representative from Healthwatch Northumberland to be involved throughout the process as an independent voice, to assist the Committee with the collation of the views of the residents and other interested parties.

As with any scrutiny review, the Review Group met in private on 4 December to scope out the work by considering the letter from the Secretary of State and the IRP report and agreeing areas requiring further evidence or investigation. Members agreed the Terms of Reference as follows:

*To consider the findings of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel, as accepted by the Secretary of State and work with Healthwatch to challenge parties in order to reach a balanced response, and provide an update to the Secretary of State by the end of January 2019 as requested, noting that work will be ongoing after that which OSC will need to monitor and review.*

The Review Group agreed a list of questions covering the areas requiring evidence and investigation, copies of which were circulated to members of the public and press present at a second meeting of the Group, held in public on 10 December. The purpose of that meeting was to formally present the questions to the CCG and Trust representatives who were asked to provide a response by 11 January 2019.

The areas of the questions focused on those areas highlighted in the IRP report:

- The future use of the site, content of wellbeing centre and review of inpatient beds;
- The impact of the temporary closure on patients, families and carers;
- The challenge against the 5th test within the NHS England "Planning, assuring and delivering service change for patients" Guidance;
- The query as to whether there is any evidence of an equality impact assessment having been undertaken prior to the public consultation;
- The issue in relation to OSC not being consulted on the temporary closure of beds in advance of the decision;
- The financial justification of closure of inpatients beds.

Responses were provided on 11 January 2019. A meeting of the Review Group was then held in private on 16 January to allow members to focus on those responses and decide whether there were any further areas to review or any further information was required in order to report back to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January, prior to preparing this response. Following the meeting on 16 January, copies of the responses to the questions provided by the CCG and Trust were circulated to the Scrutiny Committee, the local Member and the Campaign Group and made publicly available.

An opportunity was offered to the local member and the coordinator of the Campaign Group to address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January and both accepted. The meeting received a presentation from the Senior Commissioning Manager of Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group and also feedback from Healthwatch Northumberland. The Committee provided challenge to the information provided by the CCG as evidenced in the minutes.

The notes of all three Review Group meetings referred to (4 December, 10 December and 16 January) are in the public domain and available with the published agenda for the 23 January committee meeting at <http://committee.northumberland.gov.uk/Meeting.aspx?MeetID=9412>.

The role of the Committee was not to plan what services a health and wellbeing centre should include, but to agree actions the CCG needed to take in response of the IRP criticism of their consultation on the inpatient beds. Members have highlighted concerns about the engagement and consultation processes with them and there has been a strong acknowledgement from NHS partners that lessons have been learned. Healthwatch did comment that meaningful discussions could only take place if all parties were willing to engage and whilst any changes were unlikely to receive universal favour, people needed to see the impact of their input.

However, it was acknowledged by all parties that proper evaluation and meaningful engagement would take time. The CCG stated it would need until summer 2019, to carry out this work with interested parties through Focus Groups to work with them towards a solution and to feed back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at that time. The CCG also stressed that all options were still on the table, including the reopening of the inpatient beds. The Scrutiny Committee will continue to consider progress on plans and measures the CCG and Northumbria Trust are taking to reassure them that all concerns are being addressed and the recommendations set out in your letter are being implemented through our established oversight and assurance processes over that period.

This approach was endorsed and this response has been circulated to and approved by Members of Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Jeffrey Watson

Chair of Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dated: 31 January 2019





**Northumberland  
Clinical Commissioning Group**

31 January 2019

The Rt.Hon Matt Hancock MP  
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Dear Secretary of State

**REFERRAL UNDER REGULATION 23(9) OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY (PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARDS AND HEALTH SCRUTINY) REGULATIONS 2013 OF CHANGES TO ROTHBURY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL PROPOSED BY NORTHUMBERLAND CCG**

Further to my letter of 27 January 2019, and as requested in your letter of 12 November 2018, I write to provide an update on progress concerning Rothbury Community Hospital and the matters outlined in both the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) advice and your initial letter. While NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has reported progress to Northumberland County Council's (NCC) Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HWB OSC) it is aware that NCC will be submitting a separate response. The CCG fully understands this position given the independent nature of OSC's role.

In December 2018 the HWB OSC set up a cross-party review group comprising local councillors and, as an independent contributor, representation from Healthwatch Northumberland. The review group met initially to determine the additional information it required. The CCG and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHCFT) were subsequently informed that the group wished to concentrate on the following areas:

- The future use of the site; the proposed health and wellbeing centre and a review of the in-patient beds.
- The impact of the temporary closure on patients, families and carers.
- The requirements of the 'fifth test'.
- If an Equality Impact Assessment had been completed prior to the public consultation.
- The process undertaken with HWB OSC ahead of the temporary closure.
- The financial 'justification' (impact) of the closure of inpatient beds.

The CCG and NHCFT subsequently embarked on a period of work that concentrated on two main areas; an initial evaluation of all relevant data since the temporary closure (with a clear focus on the requirements of the 'fifth test' and the impact of patients, families and carers) and refining the current 'possible' and 'probable' services that could comprise the health and wellbeing centre. A comprehensive response to each of the questions posed by the review group under the broad headings above was considered at

a group meeting on 16 January 2019, attended by the CCG and NHCFT. After taking the opportunity to provide independent challenge, which was welcomed by the CCG, the review group noted the progress being made and asked that the information provided be presented to a full meeting of the HWB OSC.

Throughout this period the CCG has also maintained an open dialogue with the Save Rothbury Hospital Campaign Group. This included an amicable and constructive meeting between representatives from the group and the CCG's Accountable and Chief Operating Officers. Members of the group were provided with a further opportunity to outline their concerns. The CCG agreed to share current data, alongside the information provided to the review group, and to arrange joint visits to local community healthcare sites.

The CCG provided a comprehensive update on the areas requested by the review group to a full HWB OSC meeting held in public on 23 January 2019. It also took the opportunity to outline the way ahead from a future engagement and governance perspective and highlight once again that no final decision had been taken and that all options, including reconsideration of any case for re-opening the inpatient beds, remained on the table. While the committee once again provided some challenge and, given that the initial decision to close the ward temporarily was made in September 2016, was concerned about the projected timescales, they understood the requirement for the CCG to follow due process. The committee welcomed the progress made and, after posing additional questions, asked to be kept informed as the work progressed.

Having gained initial assurance of its current direction of travel from the HWB OSC, the CCG now intends to embark on a programme of local stakeholder engagement, designed to further determine where services should be provided, from an operational delivery and patient safety and experience perspective, and which services are responsive to local needs and could be provided in a health and wellbeing centre. This will include the setting up of a cross-stakeholder evaluation forum, with representation from the local councillor, parish councils, Healthwatch Northumberland, the campaign group and other interested local groups. The forum will be informed by smaller focus groups, facilitated by the CCG and NHCFT, which will consider both the salient financial and operational issues and the concerns of bespoke groups such as carers. The CCG will also continue to interrogate current data to fully evaluate the impact of the closure. The CCG will also commission an independent analysis of all contributing datasets to ensure further their accuracy and robustness.

While the CCG fully understands, and indeed shares, local people's wish to see a resolution at the earliest opportunity and OSC's concerns about the length of time the process has taken so far, it considers that it is vitally important that sufficient opportunity is provided to enable meaningful discussions to take place with all interested parties. It is therefore considered realistic to expect that the process will conclude in late summer 2019 when, in light of all the information available, the CCG's Governing Body will re-examine its decision to permanently close the beds and develop a health and wellbeing centre and will discuss its final decision with the HWB OSC.

The HWB OSC was content with this proposal and in the interim the CCG will provide regular progress reports to the review group.



The CCG seeks to provide assurance that it will continue to work to address all the issues outlined in the IRP advice and remains absolutely committed to ensuring that the most appropriate healthcare is provided to the people of Rothbury and indeed to all Northumberland residents.

Yours sincerely

**Janet M Guy**  
**Chair**  
**Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group**

